

I have given the histories of only 3 cases, as they are types of the disease as treated in very stout, in moderately stout and in thin persons.

I have the record of 17 other cases treated in the same manner in the last 3 years with similar good results. I wish to say that all of these patients had been treated by me prior to the thirst reduction cure by the use of iodide of potass, the ammonia salts and counter irritation to the chest with but slight benefit, and also by digitalis and strychnia when the heart showed any evidence of insufficient action.

In one additional case I failed to improve at all:

Mrs. V. N., age 50; ht. 4 ft. 11 in.; wt. 162; with a pale, pasty complexion, and evidently the subject of water-obsesity, with chronic bronchitis of the trachea and large tubes; in two months I was able to reduce the weight 3 lbs. only; she had a low blood pressure for her age, and this I find is an unfavorable condition in reducing the weight by drink restriction.

This treatment is best suited to patients with a rather abundant whitish, viscid mucus, which is expectorated with difficulty and who have some dyspnea and uneasy rest at night from the cough.

## THE ELIMINATION OF THE NOSTRUM TRAFFIC AN EVIDENT DUTY OF AMERICAN PHYSICIANS. \*

By M. I. WILBERT, Ph. M., Philadelphia.

**W**HAT is a nostrum?

Why should nostrums be eliminated?  
Why should physicians be interested in their elimination?

As an answer to the last and certainly the most directly interesting of these three questions it may be pointed out that, apart from the duties and obligations imposed on physicians by the traditional oath of Hippocrates, the practice of medicine in every state is hedged about and protected by laws that are designed to prevent the ignorant and the incompetent from imposing on the people of the commonwealth, and also, in a measure at least, are designed to protect regularly licensed members of the medical profession from imposition and unnecessary competition in the practice of their science or art.

The members of the medical profession, on the other hand, in thus seeking and accepting the protection secured to them under these several statutory enactments, are expected to guard and to protect the lives of the citizens of the state from infection and disease and, incidentally at least, to point out the dangers and, if possible, prevent the use, or at least the abuse, of anything that will in any way endanger the health or the well-being of the individual members of the community.

It is in this capacity as guardians of the health and the well-being of the individual members of the community that physicians are in duty bound to take cognizance of the present widespread inquiry into the status of nostrums and their possible deleterious effects on the health and even the lives of unwitting or indiscreet consumers.

### What is a Nostrum?

As an answer to the question, What is a nostrum? we may safely accept the usual dictionary definition and include as nostrums, or at least as objectionable nostrums, all medicines "the ingredients of which are kept secret for the purpose of restricting the profits of sale to the inventor or proprietor." Personally, I believe that the word nostrum, in keeping with its evident derivation from the Latin word *noster*, might properly include all medicines or medicinal preparations in which any one individual or firm claims, or maintains, a proprietary right, either by secrecy, trade privileges or official letters patent,

thus making the word nostrum practically synonymous with the term proprietary medicine, as used at the present time. I myself believe that this broader definition is quite in harmony with existing conditions and fully in keeping with the facts.

Restricting the word nostrum, however, as being applicable only to proprietary medicines which are in any way secret, or for which extravagant claims are made, as therapeutic agents, I am sure that you will readily agree with me that under no condition is the use of such substances in keeping with what purports to be a scientific occupation, and least of all can their use be made compatible with that most important and most responsible of all duties—the conservation and preservation of human lives.

Surely you will agree with me that if there is any one field of scientific investigation in this wide world that should be absolutely free from commercialism, or even a suspicion of secrecy, trickery and fraud, it should be the science of medicine in the very widest application of that term.

How far removed we are from even an approximate realization of this ideal becomes evident when we learn that at the present time nostrums appear to constitute fundamental necessities in the armamentarium of many physicians, as well as being the ever-ready cure-all recommended by blacksmiths and tailors.

The reasons for this unfortunate state of affairs are varied. In the first place, we must not forget that nostrums, even the vilest of them, are not readily differentiated from what might be perfectly legitimate proprietary medicines, and we must also bring ourselves to realize that manufacturers of otherwise unobjectionable remedies have adopted, and are now using, highly objectionable methods\* in exploiting their preparations.

Another potent factor in developing the present widespread use of nostrums by physicians is to be found in the fact that the physician who is at all susceptible to extraneous influences can always find, ready at hand, literature suggestive of the curative qualities of nostrums. Even in some of our present-day monographs and text-books on therapeutics, in which the application and uses of the better known and official remedies are fairly buried in a mass of contraindications and verbose descriptions of untoward results, we find that the indications and uses of the newer remedies are frequently copied verbatim from the advertising material sent out by the manufacturer, who usually takes very good care that this kind of literature never contains even a suggestion of anything derogatory to the product he advertises.

The medical practitioner, not appreciating that the derogatory testimony, in connection with the older and official remedies, represents the accumulated evidence of decades, if not of centuries, of continued use, naturally enough turns to the remedy that has little or nothing recorded against it. After a physician has met with repeated failures in the use of any given substance, he may casually inquire into the reason for this almost utter lack of disparaging evidence, in connection with the newer remedies. If he looks far enough, he will find that one reason, and a very important one, is to be found in the fact that few, if any, of us care to give publicity to our failures, no matter in what line or in what direction.

The second, and by far the more potent and more evident reason, however, is to be found in the fact that practically all new remedies belong to this gigantic class of nostrums that threatens to stultify and to debase the practice of medicine by suppressing all information in any way derogatory to the commercial success of any particular preparation.

### "Ethical" Preparations.

Some of you may have the feeling that there is a deep, wide something that naturally separates so-

\*Read before the Philadelphia County Medical Society, Dec. 27, 1905. Reprinted from the *Journal A. M. A.*

called "patent" medicines, or popular nostrums, from the "ethical" proprietaries that are advertised exclusively to physicians.

I want to assure you, and to assure you most positively, that, at the present time at least, this chimerical something exists only in the minds of well-paid detail men, and is the justification that is so anxiously sought for by editors of medical journals that depend largely on the advertising of nostrums for their existence.

That manufacturers themselves do not appreciate this distinction is to be noted by the fact that 21 per cent, or fully one-fifth of the members of the Proprietary Association of America are firms that exploit strictly "ethical" preparations, while an additional number of the members are connected either directly or indirectly with the manufacture, or at least the sale, of ethical preparations in addition to making nostrums for popular use.

That jobbers or wholesalers do not recognize the distinction is evidenced by the fact that antijag, antikamnia, celerina, cerebrine, curalene, opticura, ovarine and ozonine to the number of some twenty-five or thirty thousand nestle cheerfully side by side, in strict alphabetical order, in the proprietary medicine catalogues that are periodically issued by these firms. As for the retail druggist, he has long since found it to be to his advantage to array these articles promiscuously on his shelves, or even in his shop window, labeled at cut-rate prices.

If you were to go into the shop of the corner druggist and, as a layman, ask him to sell you an ounce of hydrated chloral, as such, he would probably refuse. If, however, you were to ask him to sell you a bottle of bromidia, he will be only too glad to supply you with practically the same amount of chloral, plus a number of other active ingredients, at cut rates; that is, from 10 to 25 per cent below the regular retail price. Some druggists might refuse to sell you half an ounce of acetanilid, but practically all will willingly sell full or broken packages of antikamnia, Kohler's antidote, ammonal, orangeine or a hundred and one similar compounds, including their own. Cut-rate druggists also advertise phenacetin, sulfonal, trional and even veronal, though they are prevented by a sense of decency or propriety, or it may be by law, from offering codein, morphin or cocain in their regularly issued price lists. Some retail druggists have gone even further in their zeal to popularize "ethical" proprietaries. They occasionally issue a special cut-rate price list of "Prominent Pharmaceutical Products Frequently Prescribed by Physicians." Such a little book is useful in two ways—it induces your patient to buy outright a full bottle of the nostrum that you have prescribed for him, at the same time retaining your prescription as authority for its continued use; and it also serves as an indication of the ethical preparations that are available to such of the laity who think that, because they are prescribed by doctors, "ethical" preparations are necessarily more efficient than the ordinary "patent" medicine or popular nostrum.

If the promiscuous sale of peruna, Hostetter's biters and Pinkham's compound is to be discouraged and decried, on account of the alcohol they contain; if the sale of catarrh cures containing cocain is to be generally prohibited, what steps, if any, should be taken to discourage the promiscuous sale of such "ethical" preparations as bromidia, papin, chlorodyne, somnos and a host of other scarcely less dangerous nostrums, such as vin Mariani\*, that are daily sold to the laity?

#### Advertising Methods.

That even the most reputable manufacturers of proprietary preparations have developed a tendency to suppress the publishing of derogatory reports must be evident to all who will take sufficient interest to peruse the advertising material they send out. You have, no doubt, been appealed to by manufacturers

of synthetic chemicals to report your successes with the use of their preparations. But have you ever been asked to report your failures, the untoward results that you have met with or the drug habits that have been formed? Have you ever met with an article outlining the contraindications for the use of their remedies in the pamphlets with which these firms supply you at frequent intervals? Do you believe that the active coal-tar preparations are applicable in all cases, regardless of age, sex, or physical infirmities? Do you believe that no dangerous and even serious accidents have ever followed their use, and do you know that practically all of the well-known preparations of this character are freely sold to and widely used by the public, regardless of possible consequences? If firms that are guaranteed an absolute monopoly of their products for a period of seventeen years and are further assured of a perpetual prestige by virtue of having been the first to bring forward any given remedy in this country, will deliberately and persistently discriminate in favor of propitious and at times even garbled reports, what can be expected of firms whose very existence depends on a more or less thinly veiled trade secret? Can you even conjecture the depths of direct or inferred dishonesty to which such concerns will descend to create a market for their products?

Properly to appreciate the reasons why the present-day traffic in nostrums should be done away with, we must fully realize that the harmful effects are invariably due to promiscuous and indiscriminate use of any one of them in all, or nearly all, cases that present themselves while that particular nostrum is in vogue. While physicians themselves are largely to be blamed in this direction, it is to the cunningly worded and frequently misleading advertising matter sent out by the manufacturers that we must look for the direct incentive to the misuse and abuse of nostrums. For illustration: When the manufacturers of one of the widely advertised mud poultices claim that their preparation will cure appendicitis, it is an untruth, and in the hands of the inexperienced and the unsophisticated this statement becomes a dangerous untruth and leads to the sacrifice of human lives. When the manufacturers, or rather the vendors, of that elegant confection that "works while you sleep" claim that their product will cure insomnia, liver troubles, intestinal disorders and a host of other more specifically mentioned ailments, they are telling an untruth and a dangerous untruth, because it leads the laity to temporize with what may be serious affections, or, even worse, because the very use of this nostrum may produce a condition that requires the regular use of cathartic medicines and thus lead up to an atonic condition of the intestinal tract, chronic constipation, a reduced power of resistance and a thousand and one possible complications that may follow in their wake.

These are but suggestions of the possibilities for harm that are to be found in connection with the twenty-five or thirty thousand nostrums exploited at the present time. Even admitting that nostrums are active and efficient, and that they are useful under certain conditions, they are nevertheless dangerous and to be condemned because they are not openly and honestly put out on their merits.

From patented synthetics to ligozone and peruna is indeed a far cry in the world of proprietary medicines, and what a mass of trickery, deceit, dishonesty and fraud is to be found between them!

#### The Council on Pharmacy and Chemistry.

Even to enumerate all of the preparations that are advertised or available would take hours, if not days. To sort them over and to estimate their probable worth, on the available evidence, is a task that would appear to be well nigh interminable. Some attempt is now being made to sort out from this fathomless, boundless mass of material those preparations that are generally considered to be worthy of recogni-

\*Mariani and Company state that their preparation does not contain cocaine.

tion or that are at least evidently less objectionable than the rest.

This attempt is being made, in connection with the American Medical Association, by the recently instituted Council on Pharmacy and Chemistry. It is the object of this council to gather evidence for and against the several proprietary preparations that are now being offered to the medical profession of this country, and by comparing the evident status of the several remedies with the rules that have been adopted as a minimum of requirement to decide on their eligibility to appear in a semi-official list or book to be called "New and Non-official Remedies."

That this effort is not being made any too early must be evident to those who realize the ever-increasing number of evidently fraudulent nostrums that are being exploited at the present time. The difficult and thankless task of selecting the more worthy proprietary remedies that confronts the members of the Council on Pharmacy and Chemistry of the American Medical Association would certainly appear to merit your attention and active co-operation.

#### Co-operation of the Profession.

I believe it is your duty, however, to do more, infinitely more, by taking a personal interest and an active part in this tremendously important undertaking of eliminating at least the more objectionable nostrums of all kinds from popular sale and certainly to banish from the practice of medicine the more objectionable compounds that are exploited as "ethical" preparations.

I also believe that it is the duty of each one of you individually to become thoroughly acquainted with at least some of the phases of the deceit and deception that are practiced by the promoters of proprietary medicines or nostrums and to insist that manufacturers of remedies, designed ostensibly for use by medical practitioners, exploit their wares honestly and in keeping with their merits.

I believe it to be your duty to inquire into the influences that manufacturers of nostrums, individually as well as collectively as members of the powerful and wealthy Proprietary Association of America, have exerted, do exert and will exert on the secular as well as on the professional journals of this country and to try to overcome or, if possible, to nullify this influence by your concerted efforts and action.

It will be idle for you to suppose that any appreciable change in the existing conditions can be brought about by your say-so or by your wishes. The impending conflict, to eliminate only the more evident nostrums from the pale of respectability, while it is admittedly disagreeable and unpleasant, is full worthy of your aid and your attention. For ultimate success it will be essentially necessary that each one of you contribute, not alone occasionally, but frequently and persistently. You can contribute most readily if you will insist that the untoward results from the use of proprietary medicines be given proper publicity in connection with the name of the remedy. You can also assist by informing your patients and your friends of the possible dangers that are to be encountered in the promiscuous or long-continued use of even the least objectionable and apparently most harmless nostrum.

You can also contribute if you yourself will desist from the use of proprietary medicines, with the composition or the limitations of which you are not thoroughly familiar. You will be able to do this the more readily if you will but become more thoroughly familiar with the almost inexhaustible fund of well-known and well-tried remedies of the Pharmacopeia, remedies that are easily tested, readily proved, widely used and are certainly obtainable in any section of this country.

This I believe to be your duty, as citizens of the commonwealth, in return for the protection and the privileges that are being accorded to you.

I believe it to be your duty to your patients, as

physicians, in order to merit their continued confidence and patronage. And, last, but by no means least, I believe it to be your duty to yourselves, as men, in order to foster and to preserve your own self-esteem and self-respect.

## REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON VITAL STATISTICS.

By WM. J. G. DAWSON, M. D., Chairman, Eldridge, Cal.

(Continued from Page 53, Vol. IV, No. 2)

SECTION 17. If any physician who is in medical attendance upon any deceased person at the time of death shall neglect or refuse to make out and deliver to the undertaker, sexton or other person in charge of the interment, removal or other disposition of the body, upon request, the medical certificate of cause of death hereinbefore provided for, or shall willfully or knowingly make a false certification of the cause of death in any case, he shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor.

If any undertaker, sexton or other person acting as undertaker shall inter, remove or otherwise dispose of the body of any deceased person without having received a burial or removal permit as herein provided, he shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor.

Any registrar, deputy registrar or sub-registrar who shall neglect or fail to enforce the provisions of this act in his district, or shall neglect or refuse to perform any of the duties imposed upon him by this act, or by the instructions and directions of the state registrar, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor.

And any person or persons who shall violate any of the provisions of this act, or shall willfully neglect or refuse to perform any duties imposed upon them by the provisions of this act, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor.

Any transportation company or common carrier transporting or carrying, or accepting through its agents or employes for transportation or carriage, the body of any deceased person without an accompanying permit, issued in accordance with the provisions of this act, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and upon conviction thereof shall be fined not less than fifty nor more than two hundred dollars.

SECTION 18. Local registrars are hereby charged with the strict and thorough enforcement of the provisions of this act in their districts under the supervision and direction of the state registrar. They shall make immediate report to the state registrar of any violations of this law coming to their notice by observation or upon complaint of any person, or otherwise. The state registrar shall have authority to investigate cases of irregularity or violation of law, personally or by accredited representatives, and all registrars shall aid him, upon request, in such investigations. When he shall deem it necessary, he shall report cases of violation of any of the provisions of this act to the prosecuting attorney or other proper officer of the county or municipality, with a statement of the facts and circumstances, and when any such case is reported to them by the state registrar, all prosecuting attorneys, or officials acting in such capacity, shall forthwith initiate and promptly follow up the necessary court proceedings against the parties responsible for the alleged violations of law.

SECTION 19. All acts and parts of acts in conflict or inconsistent with the provisions of this act are hereby repealed.

SECTION 20. This act shall take effect March 31, 1905.

Assembly bill No. 347, introduced by Mr. Gates and passed by the last legislature, amends and re-enacts the laws pertaining to the registration of births, marriages and deaths, and is as follows:

SECTION 1. Section three thousand and seventy-four of the Political Code of the State of California is hereby amended to read as follows: